

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 14, 1850.
Gentlemen: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of November 18th, propounding to me certain questions and asking an early answer. Your letter was handed to me in Jackson, but my stay there was short, and my engagements of such a character, as to prevent a reply before I left for this city. I therefore embraced the earliest moment, (since my arrival here,) that I could spare from my official duties to comply with your request. The right of the constituent to demand, and the duty of the representative to give, frankly, and fully, his opinion upon all questions on which he may be called to act in his representative character, or upon all questions touching the relation which exists between them, as constituent and representative, I fully admit. Whether your inquiries are connected with any subject on which I can by any possibility be called to act, as a representative in Congress, I shall not stop to inquire, because I have no desire to withhold my answer, either as a representative or a citizen, to these or any other questions you may wish to propound.

Your questions are the following:
1st. Are you in favor of a dissolution of the Union now, or hereafter, because of the late session of Congress?

2nd. Are you in favor of the establishment of a Southern Confederacy now, or hereafter, because of the legislation of the late session of Congress?

3rd. Are you in favor of the secession of the State of Mississippi from the Union now, or hereafter, because of the legislation of the late session of Congress?

4th. Are you in favor of any, and what kind of resistance, on the part of this State, or all, or any of the slave States, to the recent acts of Congress?

The first three of these questions are not novel. I met them not long since, (substantially, if not literally,) in a correspondence between a distinguished Senator of Louisiana and some of his constituents. I had supposed that my position on this question was well understood by my constituents, at least those who had taken the pains to inquire what it was, and such is my belief now. I have not either in Congress, or before my constituents, proposed or advocated, either a dissolution of the Union, the secession of my own State, or the formation of a Southern Confederacy, and my opinions have undergone no recent change. Why then should you ask for information on these questions, unless your object was to give me an opportunity of refuting the calumnies of those who seek to place me in a false position? I have not deemed it to be my duty to decide for my constituents, what remedy they should adopt, in the evils imposed on them by the late act of Congress, but determined to take counsel from them as to the remedy to be adopted, if they should approve my course in opposing these measures. If I were of the opinion, however, that a dissolution of the Union was a proper remedy now to be adopted, I should immediately dissolve all connection with the general government by resigning my seat in the House of Representatives, and assume the ground boldly. I do not regard this as the issue now before the people of Mississippi, but one which has been raised by designing men, to conceal from the public gaze their own recency and treachery to the South. My object has been since my first entrance upon public life, to guard against all violations of the Constitution; and to preserve in its original purity, that Union which was formed by the Convention of 1787: a Union of equality and justice established by the Constitution—that Constitution which was designed as a shield of protection to every part of the Confederacy. My policy has been directed to this end, and will continue to be, until all hope of preservation has been lost; then I shall believe it to be the duty of the Southern people to go out of the Union, as the only means of saving and transmitting to posterity the principles of the Constitution. You will thus perceive that my constant effort has been to save and not to destroy the Union.

You also inquire what my opinions will hereafter be? whether I will be hereafter for the remedies suggested in your first three questions on account of the legislation at the late session of Congress. What my opinions and what my position will be hereafter, I cannot now determine. I shall form my opinions upon the state of facts which may exist hereafter; draw my deductions, and take positions accordingly; and without the supernatural power of foreseeing the precise state of facts and circumstances by which we may be surrounded; and the consequences, immediate or remote, which may flow from the late acts of Congress, must decline giving a conclusion upon an undefined hypothesis. My opinions when formed will not be withheld from any portion of my constituents who may desire to know them.

In answer to your fourth and last question, I state, that I am for resistance to the late acts of Congress, known as the "Adjustment" or "Compromise." I believed that great justice was done the Southern States by the passage of these bills. Territory enough for a vast empire, acquired from Mexico at the close of the late war, the common property of all the States, acquired by their joint efforts, and bought with their common treasure, has been wrested from the South, and appropriated to the occupancy and enjoyment of the North by this "scheme of adjustment." Its authors call it a "scheme of adjustment," but posterity will be more likely to call it a scheme of plunder. A band of organized transgressors, a majority of whom were foreigners and native Californians, without the authority of law, without a precedent in the history of this government, but in violation of the constitution, were permitted under the fostering care of the general government, to seize and appropriate the larger and better portion of all this territory to the uses and purposes of the North! The South was excluded from it by a provision enacted in part at least by native Californians, upon whom the rights of citizenship had not been conferred; by foreigners who had not been naturalized, and who could not vote anywhere within the United States. A Convention was called by a military chieftain, if not at the suggestion, at least by the permission and approval of the general government, which consumed the acts of injustice upon the rights of the South; a convention of which half the inhabitants of the territory knew nothing, and in whose proceedings they felt and took no interest; a convention, the irregularities of which, are seldom surpassed in the history of the world. It was incumbent on the general government as the common guardian and protector of all the States to guard and protect the interests of the South in this common property. In failing to do so, it has fastened on you, this humble privilege of carrying your slave property to Utah and New Mexico, why did not they remove the obstructions which they say exist, and exclude your slave property from Utah and New Mexico? They deny your right to carry your slaves to these territories; they voted down every proposition asserting this right; and held up the Mexican law in *terrorem* over the Southern slaveholder. When the entire North, and part of the South too, hold this opinion that you are excluded by the Mexican law, (an opinion which I have never held,) what will be the practical result? Will Southern men risk carrying their slaves to these territories—incurring the hazard and expense of a law-

suit to ascertain whether they can hold them? They will not. Property is timid, and the whole of this vast acquisition will be appropriated to the purposes of free soil, and come into the Union as free States, unless some action shall be taken by the South to break this current of events.

By this adjustment a Southern State has been discovered, a tax of millions of dollars imposed upon the people, two-thirds of which, must be paid by the South. Why has this been done? That territory enough for one large State—slave territory under the resolutions of annexation, might be converted into free-soil, and come into the Union as a free State. Such was the object and such will be the effect of dismembering Texas. No other consideration could have secured the passage of the bill. By the adoption of this "scheme of adjustment," the South has been surrounded by free territory, which will, if no countervailing influences be brought to bear, come into the Union as free States. One great object for which free-soilers have been contending for years, is likely to be accomplished, to wit: To surround the South with a cordon of free States.

By another feature of this scheme, the slave trade has been abolished in the District of Columbia. This is but the entering wedge to the assumption of jurisdiction over slavery, within the district, and to general emancipation. The next step will be to establish it. The bill provides that if slaves shall be brought into the district for sale, the owner shall forfeit his title and the slaves shall become free. If Congress possess the power to liberate the slaves because he brought them here for sale, for what purpose can they not declare him free? The bill does not stop here even—it operates is not confined to the District of Columbia alone. It is an interference with the slave trade between the States. The rights of both Maryland and Virginia to carry on the slave trade with the other Southern States, are impaired by it. This right is not left free and unincumbered as it existed heretofore, but is clogged and obstructed. The citizens of these States can no longer collect their slaves in Depots for sale here, or to be carried to other States. They are excluded from this market and turned beyond the limits of this District. The South should demand the repeal of this law, unwarranted alike by the provisions of the Constitution, and common justice to the Southern States.

The Southern portion of this "Compromise," is the fugitive slave bill. That bill is intended to give force and effect to an express provision of the Constitution. The bill confers no right. The right of the slaveholder to recapture his slave was conferred by the framers of the Constitution, and the bill only designed to give practical operation to that provision, which has been imperative for sixty years, in half of the non-slaveholding States. If to enforce an express provision of the Constitution, be a concession, then I should be willing to admit this concession, provided the Northern States would enforce the law. This, however, has not been done, and I fear will not. In one State it has been rendered a dead letter by legislative enactments, (Vermont,) and in the others the efforts to enforce it have been wholly ineffectual in most cases.

Such being in my opinion the character of the acts passed at the late session, I am not for tamely acquiescence or submission. I am fully aware, however, that but little can be done by the South in her present divided and distracted condition to stay the hand of the aggressor. There is too much division of sentiment, feeling and opinion, in the Southern States. If the South had been united, and spoken as one man through her delegation in the last Congress, against the "adjustment," and the fugitive slave bill, and the other measures, the divisions of her people at home on this question, have brought her to her present lamentable condition—and will continue, if not healed, to invite aggression, till her fate shall be sealed, and she become to this government what Ireland is to England, or Hungary to Austria. How is the South to be united on this question, in defence of her rights? I know of no better plan than the one suggested by the October Convention of Mississippi—a Southern Convention. Let all the Southern States hold a Convention composed of delegates from each State, to be held in the people—let them meet and consult together for the safety of the South, and the preservation of her constitutional rights—for the preservation of that Union of the States bequeathed them by the patriots of '76; the Union of which the Constitution is the bond. In this way the South may possibly be united as one man—speaking but one voice, made by a common feeling—occupying the same common ground; and when thus united, and shewing a determination to defend her rights at all hazards to the last extremity, aggression will cease, and not till then. This in my judgment, is the only plan under Heaven by which the Union can be preserved—I mean a Constitutional Union worthy of preservation, and not a Union without the Constitution. If the South would thus unite and demand of the North a recognition of her to go into Utah and New Mexico with her slave property, the right would be conceded. If she would demand a division of California on the line of 36 deg. 30 min., (California concerning, and this she would undoubtedly do,) she would in my opinion get it. She should also demand of the North, and have permanently settled the question, that slaves may be carried into territory hereafter acquired, and Slave States admitted into the Union. This is a point of vital importance to the institutions of the South, that should be settled without delay. If no more slave territory is to be acquired, and no more slave States admitted into the Union, the overthrow of the institution of slavery is not only certain in the future, but it is now certain, but the day is not very distant when it will be done. Confine it within its present limits, and there finally will be a very extermination between the two races in the South. They can never live upon terms of social and political equality there. And I do not hesitate to say that I would prefer seeing the Union dissolved a thousand times over, or the South filling one white and honorable grave, rather than the whites and blacks living on terms of social and political equality in the Southern States.

I am then, gentlemen, in favor of a Southern Convention, called for the purposes briefly indicated to unite the South to save if possible, (and I believe it possible,) the Union and the Constitution which our revolutionary patriots gave us. I am also in favor of a State Convention, and the adoption of the measures of non-intercourse. Let Mississippi, and every other Southern State, cease to buy manufactures in the North—build up railroads, establish arsenals and armories. In this way the South will be rendered independent of the North, and secure to herself the right of self government. This is her true policy, whether she remains in or shall be driven out. By the adoption of this policy, the North will be taught her dependence upon the South. When she loses the patronage of the South, she will have lost the best customer she has in the world, and under a returning sense of justice may be disposed to acknowledge and respect our rights.

If constitutional remedies should not arrest the hand of aggression, turn back the tide of fanaticism, and secure to us respect for our institutions to you, this humble privilege of carrying your slave property to Utah and New Mexico, why did not they remove the obstructions which they say exist, and exclude your slave property from Utah and New Mexico? They deny your right to carry your slaves to these territories; they voted down every proposition asserting this right; and held up the Mexican law in *terrorem* over the Southern slaveholder. When the entire North, and part of the South too, hold this opinion that you are excluded by the Mexican law, (an opinion which I have never held,) what will be the practical result? Will Southern men risk carrying their slaves to these territories—incurring the hazard and expense of a law-

suit to ascertain whether they can hold them? They will not. Property is timid, and the whole of this vast acquisition will be appropriated to the purposes of free soil, and come into the Union as free States, unless some action shall be taken by the South to break this current of events.

Let no man, be a slave or a non-slaveholder, lay this paper down until he shall have weighed well the reasons of the writer, who is a true friend not only to the South, but to the whole Union.

It can be easily demonstrated that the non-slaveholders are more vitally—more fearfully—interested in the question of abolition than any other class. The doctrines of the abolitionists and free-soilers have for their present and ultimate object the destruction of the institution of slavery—the total emancipation of all slaves in the South. All they do, and propose, and strive for, in Congress and elsewhere, having any connection with the subject, looks directly to the accomplishment of this great object. It is not expected that any one measure will effect it, but it is to be done by a combination of measures, not running parallel with each other, but effectually converging to the same point—to the same burning focus, like the rays of the sun falling upon a convex glass and producing fire and causing destruction. The measures afflicting the question which have lately received the sanction of Congress and the President, and which have for their purpose the robbing of the South of her just share of the public domain, and the limiting of slavery to its present boundaries, are most emphatically a part of this infamous combination. There is no project more startling than that of confining slavery to its present limits. Have people of the South justly considered it? It is a self-evident proposition that the effect would be substantially the same as if they were gradually to lessen the number of slaves in the South. The slave population increases proportionally faster than the white; there are no restrictions upon their marriage and intercourse, while many white persons for various reasons choose not to marry. The increase in numbers of the former, may be fairly stated from five to eight per cent. annually. There are plantations where the increase is nine to ten per cent. Consequently, the result, in a given number of years, is the same to a certain extent, as if slave territory were converted into free territory, and the slaves inhabiting it driven back to other slave territory.

It has rarely been the case at any period of the world that a people were hemmed in without the privilege or power of migration. The Spartans had a law or regulation in virtue of which, when their helots or slaves became too numerous, they massacred them. Whether this was the legitimate result of any free-solism of antiquity, history does not fully disclose. But it would be rash to conclude that the Spartans would thus murder thousands wantonly, and without proceeding upon a principle of necessity. Perhaps they had some Ohio or New England neighbors whose religion consisted in establishing "a cordon of free states," and who required, or whose policy required, this inhuman butchery as an offering to their infatuation. Whether the efforts of the people of the North, and of their submission allies in the South, will ever render a Spartan regulation of massacre necessary, remains to be told.

Abolition of slavery, no matter how it may be brought about, whether by a single decree of the federal government, or by a series of laws, decrees, and enactments, will be followed by the same train of evils. In either event there will be internal war and carnage,—there will be robbery, pillaging, plundering, and brutal crimes of every kind and hue,—there will be violations and massacres of our wives and daughters on the one hand, and continual destruction of slaves or blacks on the other,—the sanctuaries of God will be desecrated, and the very foundations and frame work of society will be riven asunder with volcanic terror,—our homes will become desolate and our fields be laid waste by force and neglect. Does the poor man, the man who owns no slaves—see no feature in this picture that strikes the tenderest chords of his heart? Does he no wave—a breaker, in that troubled ocean,—no ship-wreck for him in that mighty tempest? Is there no doom written for him in that dread tide of revolution and carnage which is to roll along our valleys and across our mountain barriers,—for which the fanatics of the North daily pour out their hellish incantations in the guise of prayers, and for which they have desecrated the Constitution and covered it over with the shining exhalations of hypocrisy and perjury, until the very difference between justice and robbery has grown dim in their sight? Does he love his wife? Does he love his children? Does he love his native land?

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own native land?"

Is it nothing to him that the land of his home is to be despoiled? With him, is an ownership of slaves a necessary preliminary to patriotism? Is it nothing to him that his wife and children are to be cut with knives or beat with clubs, and forced to an unnatural association with black slaves? And if he happen to have money enough to enable him to get away and carry his family with him, is it nothing to him to be driven like a base spaniel into a life-time of exile, and to be forced to tear himself away from those scenes and associations which have grown deeper in his heart, even if he has grown stronger in manhood, and which are intimately blended with all that he held sacred and dear? The hearts of all poor men in the South will send up an everlasting response of virtue and patriotism to these questions.

There is a large class of persons in the South who are not poor men, and who yet do not own slaves. Are their interests not identified with their homes? Are they not equally with the slaveholder, for themselves and their posterity, interested in securing peace, tranquillity, and justice, for all time to come? Surely they are.

The contrast between the condition of the poor man and the slaveholder can be very briefly drawn. In the evils which would most certainly follow abolition, the former would lose everything,—property, personal security, political equality, to say nothing of the insult and injury to which himself and family would be liable, and in a large majority of instances he would not have money with which to go to any distance to defend himself if forced to leave his home, and even if he had, he would not have means of obtaining land and the necessities of life after he went there.

The slaveholder, on the other hand, would lose nothing but his property in slaves, for doubtless, even in the anarchy that would prevail, his lands, lying in large bodies, would be of some value to him. When he saw the storm coming he could take his family and leave for another country, where, with the money he had accumulated, he could purchase a home and live comfortably.

It is easy to conclude, therefore, that all classes of population in the South are interested in the strictest maintenance of her rights and in the permanent of her institutions. Besides, the question of slavery affects no particular class,—it is mingled and blended most intricately with the whole frame work of society. In many instances, one brother owns a large number of slaves while the other brothers own none; and so of the other relations of marriage and of blood. This, in connection with the legal subdivision of property by the laws of descent, will always prevent the institution from being connected exclusively with any caste or division of the people. It must inevitably remain an interest of the whole.

The poor man of the South is more independent and comfortable than he could be anywhere else upon the face of the globe. In his social progress he encounters no mobs, no riots, no violent political excitements, no communism, no agrarianism, no mormonism, no anti-masonry, no lawless leagues of the rabble. In his labor he has to contend with no insatiable greed for our institutions, no daily labors going about begging but unable to obtain employment. It is true, he com-

petes with slave labor, but slave labor is chiefly directed to the culture of cotton, rice, tobacco, and sugar; products about the cultivation of which he cares but little, or, if he does, he learns that competition with slave labor here is no worse than with white slave labor elsewhere; he is not taxed to support no poor rates, no work houses. He lives quietly, and, if he be industrious, comfortably; he loves the religion and faith of his fathers, and when he lies down to die, he is yet a stranger to those tumults, strifes, troubles, and sufferings which in most other countries make it almost doubtful whether life is a blessing.

The injustice and unconstitutionality, and the design and effect of the abolition of the District slave trade is powerfully portrayed in the following condensed language of one of Virginia's Representatives in Congress in 1850:

"But, sir, (said he) it is contended that, if Congress has no power to abolish slavery in the District, it has the power to suppress what is tauntingly called the 'slave trade'; and that, upon this ground, abolition petitions containing this prayer should be received. This, sir, is a more daring, more unblushing proposition to violate the rights of private property, if possible, than the other. The rights of sale and purchase are necessary incidents to the rights of property; and, so long as slaves are regarded as property, they must necessarily be subjects of sale and purchase; and Congress has just as much authority to prohibit the buying and selling of horses, cattle, cotton, tobacco, and any other species of property, as the buying and selling of slaves. It is a social right to acquire and to alien property that stands protected by the Constitution. Such an interference would be well worthy the ignorance and despotism of the dark ages. I do not doubt that in the exercise of this right, so far as the sale of slaves is concerned, there have been abuses—many acts of cruelty and severity, revolting to the best feelings of humanity. But, sir, these abuses are not confined to the relation of master and slave; they have been sometimes perpetrated in the more endearing relations of husband and wife, parent and child, master and apprentice; and I do not doubt that, in the factories of the North, many such have been perpetrated. But, however much we may lament human depravity, and however much we may deplore the cruelty and suffering, we cannot control them by destroying great constitutional rights. We cannot say to a citizen of Maryland, you shall not buy property in Virginia; nor to the citizen of Virginia, you shall not purchase in Maryland. Such a prohibition would be as tyrannical and oppressive as despotism could make it; and if you could prohibit the buying and selling of slaves, by the exercise of the same power, you could prohibit all intercourse between the States, by prohibiting the buying and selling of their stock, agricultural productions, and manufactures. Has the Federal Government such formidable and dangerous power as this? If it has, then, sir, we are more the subjects of an iron despotism than I could have imagined. But, sir, Congress has no right to abolish the (so-called) 'slave trade' in the District of Columbia."

Such are the nature and design of the Abolition of the Slave trade in the District of Columbia, and such was the light in which it was viewed by the entire South at the time of the utterance of this language, and for years subsequent. It was considered unconstitutional, and an initiative attack upon the Slave institutions of the South, and a palpable and outrageous discrimination against the property of the Southern people. If Congress has the right to prohibit a citizen of Virginia from selling his Slave in the District, it has an equal right to say that a Boston Manufacturer shall not sell a bale of goods there. Has Congress such a power? If it has, then indeed is this movement a despotism. But it has made no such prohibition against Boston Merchants, and will make none such. What follows then? Why that Congress, the guardian of all the States alike, discriminates against Southern property!! It has said in effect, that the Boston merchant may introduce his goods or property of any kind or description into the District, may have his Depot of deposit, and may sell at his leisure; but you Virginian; you Southern man, shall not introduce your property into the District for sale, nor even pass with it through the District, under the penalty of its being forthwith seized, and for which the Southern people submit this to outrage and insult? Will they suffer themselves to be thus assigned an inferior position in this government to the northern section of it?

We are told by the submissionists that it is a mere police regulation—the abatement of a nuisance—which Congress, as the legislature of the District, has a right to adopt—and that the negro trade is offensive to Northern men, who come to Washington. If it be a "nuisance" for A, to sell his slaves then the Constitution itself is a "nuisance" for it recognizes the right. And if Congress has the right to decide that any particular species of property is a "nuisance," it has the right to decide that any other species is a "nuisance," and thus would the right of property depend upon the arbitrary will of Congress and not upon the inalienable rights of the citizen! Upon the same principle, Congress would have the right to decide that horses and hogs were "nuisances," and could emancipate them if driven within the District as merchandise!

Again: If Congress can abolish the Slave trade in the District, to pander to the delicate sensibilities of the northern Yankees, and Foreign abolitionists, because that trade is offensive to them, then upon the same principle and for the same purposes, it has the unquestionable right to abolish Slavery itself, because Slavery is more offensive to the North than the Slave trade!

We hold it to be conclusive and indisputable then, that the abolition of the Slave trade in the District of Columbia, is a gross and palpable infraction of the Constitution, a crying outrage and unmitigated insult to the South, and above all, a concession to Congress of the power to abolish Slavery itself in that District. We call upon Southern people, without distinction of party, to solemnly ponder these startling facts. They may depend that a storm is brewing, which will ere long burst with destructive effects upon their heads! Let them wake up and prepare to meet the crisis.—"The first step is taken."

"But this unjust discrimination between the citizens of the North and of the South, within a jurisdiction set apart for their common government, proposed as it is, not in compliance with any demand made by the people of the District, but in deference to the fell spirit of anti-slavery, is not the only objection to the bill. Pass it, and the long mooted question of Congressional jurisdiction over the subject of slavery in the District, will have been settled. It will prove to be but the introduction to the ultimate object—the total abolition of slavery itself in the District, and the creation of a free-soil Territory, in the very bosom of the slaveholding States. Adopt this measure, and a breast-work will have been constructed, from which the shafts of abolition will be thrown with most deadly effect against the entire social system of the Southern States. In view of the avowed objects of the North, as declared here and elsewhere, I trust that the institutions of the South, will have been settled. It will prove to be but the introduction to the ultimate object—the total abolition of slavery itself in the District, and the creation of a free-soil Territory, in the very bosom of the slaveholding States. Adopt this measure, and a breast-work will have been constructed, from which the shafts of abolition will be thrown with most deadly effect against the entire social system of the Southern States. In view of the avowed objects of the North, as declared here and elsewhere, I trust that the institutions of the South, will have been settled. It will prove to be but the introduction to the ultimate object—the total abolition of slavery itself in the District, and the creation of a free-soil Territory, in the very bosom of the slaveholding States. 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